

NORMAN J. B. TOOKER, OF A. F. STONEMAN &
CO. YARMOUTH, N. S., MAY 28, 1895.

Interviewed by Wm. Wakeham and R. Rathbun
(long hand)

Stoneman & Co. are interested in the traps
about Yarmouth.

Bluff Head trap, as a whole, has been the
most successful on this shore, due to the fact
that the deeper water approaches the shore more
closely here than where the other traps are
located. The spring mackerel trim the shore
in this region.

The present number of traps on the shore
between Yarmouth Pt. and Maitland has been
regulated by experience, and to increase the
number would be ruinous. At one time there
were many more, and some of them were only $\frac{1}{8}$
of a mile apart, the shortest interval allowed
by law, but they cut each other off on mackerel.
The reduction in number was brought about by
the owners themselves, whose interests were
combined in those now set.

The old license fee for traps here and elsewhere was \$40. Now they charge 50 cents a fathom for the leader. Some of the leaders are so long as to bring the fee up to \$80, which he thinks is unjust.

The traps which have been fished on the shore between Yarmouth Point and Maitland when they were most numerous, were located as follows:

Yarmouth Bar.	- - - - -	4
Cheggoggin Pt.	- - - - -	1
Foot's Cove.	- - - - -	1
Bluff Head.	- - - - -	1
Just above Bluff Head.	- -	1
Sanford.	- - - - -	3
Iron Mine.	- - - - -	1
Robbins.	- - - - -	1
Short Beach.	- - - - -	1
Burn's Pt.	- - - - -	1
County Line.	- - - - -	1

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At one time there was a trap at Jeboque Pt., perhaps 8 years ago. The next is at Murder Island, and is there now. Thinks there was one a short time at Harry's Island. There is now 1 at Pubnico Pt. Used to be 2.

Is not sure of the number between Murder Island and Cape Sable, but thinks there may be 10.

The first spring run of mackerel is generally large fish. Get the first in about all the traps at the same time, may be a day or two difference. Get only a few fish at first; they come scattering along in the beginning. Last 10 to 12 days. Some years there are only 2, 3 or 4 days when the big fish run, and then the second run would come right after.

With the first run the headland traps do best, The other traps do better on the second

This year have had bigger fish than he ever knew of before.

The second run comes 3 or 4 days to a week after the first run ends.

Of the first run they make the bulk of their catch in the traps in the course of 3 or

4 days.

As to the second run, they may, perhaps, get only a few fish in the first instance, and then may get several good runs in succession.

Thinks lobster pots keep the mackerel off, and account for their recent scarcity.

Second run strikes over the same extent of shore here as the first run.

John's Island traps have hitherto done better than the traps up this way (on first run), but not so far this year.

The large traps (two hearts) have better facilities for holding a large catch than those with 1 heart.

Probably 1 trap site is as good as another in the long run.

First and second spring runs are going eastward. They strike the west shore and move along it.

Some years they get very few fish on the first run, but does not remember that that run has ever failed altogether.

If there is an east wind, when the first run comes on, they may get very few fish.

Southerly and westerly winds are best. Seem to blow them on the shore.

One flood tide off here will carry you as far into the Bay of Fundy as 2 ebb tides will carry you the other way.

Stop trap fishing about middle of July, sometimes a little earlier or later. The net gets fouled up after it has been in the water so long, and the least breeze will tear them.

Doesn't think there are more than scattering mackerel on this shore in the summer except in St. Mary's Bay.

Stoneman & Co. have a trap in St. Mary's Bay. Begin to get mackerel there between August 1 and 15, and they continue until perhaps October, but some years there are not many, last year, for instance, Mackerel are very capricious. May leave there suddenly and early.

Only 3 traps were set in St. Mary's Bay last year (1894), 3 or 4 years ago there were at least 8 there, 5 of which went up from here.

There are quite a number of weirs in St. Mary's Bay, and they are pretty well up toward the head of the bay. They take mackerel,

herring and shad.

Do not fish as many gills about here now as formerly; not $\frac{1}{4}$ as many. Use them off Jeboque Pt., Yarmouth Bar, and some along the shore down to Cape Sable. As to distance from shore, they fish from back (inside) of the traps to 3 miles off shore.

Never saw any purse seiners off Yarmouth. Has no opinion regarding the effects of purse seining.

Traps are generally set only for mackerel. At John's Island they may leave them down during July and August for bait, and at that time there may also be some small mackerel which are taken.

All mackerel from about here, at whatever season taken, go fresh to Boston. The mackerel from the traps and weirs in St. Mary's Bay are also shipped fresh. Most of these go through Yarmouth; a few may go by way of St. John.

Does not know that they have any of the same kind of traps east of Cape Sable, but they have small floating traps around Lunenburg.

Mackerel are much scarcer than they were formerly. When the trap at Yarmouth Bar was first set, they would catch as many there as they do now in all the traps west of Cape Sable. That was 15 years ago. Fish are now shyer. Used to come right in shore. Attribute this to their being chased by the purse seiners

There is no hooking done here now, except that they may fish hooks for small mackerel, tinkers, in Yarmouth Bay, in August. They do some hooking in St. Mary's Bay.

Drag seines have not been used here for a long time. May use some on Digby Neck shore.

The gill nets are 150 meshes deep, and are set at the surface. The mesh is 3, 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ and 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches, for the first run. Perhaps not large enough for the first run this year, but thinks reason why they are not catching more is that the mackerel may be swimming too low, and mostly go under the nets. This year the water has fired and the gill nets have made poor catches. The wind has been east most of the time. A 4 inch mesh would only be suitable for very large fish.

In June the gill net mesh used is 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ to

3 inches. Not as much gilling is done in June as in May. In July the gilling is mostly for herring.

Could tell whether salmon made their appearance in the spring before the traps were set or not. There has been only a small catch of salmon in the traps this year, and never make a large catch that way. The salmon so taken do not belong to the Nova Scotia rivers. They differ in quality and in color of flesh; are better. Differ in shape and are of larger size. Are most abundant the last of May. In June they get very few. 30 lbs. is a very large salmon for the traps, and an exceptional size. Take only 1 or 2 in a season.

Measure cod here from line connecting napes to end of flesh at beginning of tail. 22 inch cod are required for the American market.

He cannot say that cod and pollock have become any scarcer.

The fishermen about here have hard work getting bait after the traps are taken up.

Have good runs of herring about here at

certain seasons. Has seen them in the spring between the first and second runs of mackerel. Most herring are caught in September. About Robbin's Point is one of the best places, beginning just after the traps are taken up. Yarmouth Bar is also a good place. September herring are good, but not real fat. Thinks they spawn in August. About Mud Island, one of the Tusquets, is a spawning place. They are caught with gill nets.

The traps about here are set in time to take the first mackerel, so there is no question that the record of the first catch in the traps indicates their first appearance. The gill nets are put out earlier than the traps. Can tell very closely the time when the traps should be ready.

The salt mackerel noted as shipped from Yarmouth in Custom House records did not come from the catch directly about here. May have come from farther down east.

It is not the main body of mackerel which strikes the shore at Yarmouth. Only stray bodies which come a little too far west. The great body passes across Georges, and strikes

much farther east.

They have mackerel traps in the bay at the lower or Atlantic entrance to the Gut of Canso.

GEORGE CHURCHILL, YARMOUTH, N. S.

MAY 28, 1895.

Interviewed by Wm. Wakeham and R. Rathbun
(long hand).

Owens the Bluff Pt. trap, which has done the best this year. 40 years old. Has fished for mackerel since he was a boy. Has fished traps during the past 10 years.

At his trap gets the first mackerel May 13 to 16. Have been years when they have taken 1 or 2 mackerel as early as May 9.

The way it generally runs is this: The first day they may get anywhere from 2 to 10 mackerel; second day increases to 100 to 150; possibly the third day will get as good a catch as any of the first run, sometimes as many as 60 to 100 barrels.

This year (1895) on May 15 shipped 260 mackerel; May 18, 164 barrels (60 in a bbl.); May 22, 415 bbls. (70 in a bbl.); on May 23 caught 500 bbls. (70 in a bbl.), half of which were shipped May 25, and the remainder May 27. This is up to date of interview.

In 1894 shipped as follows: May 16, 87

mackerel; next boat, 150 mackerel; next boat, 60 bbls. (75 to a bbl.); next boat, 81 bbls.; May 30, 151 bbls.; next boat, 40 bbls.; next boat 20 bbls.; next boat 10 bbls. The second run did not come on in 1893, but continued to take mackerel in small quantities up to the middle of June. These were practically all large mackerel during this season, with a little sprinkling of the sizes belonging to the second run, but not many of them. Waited for the second run until the end of June, but it did not appear.

The mackerel are not weighed here, but in Boston by the Custom's officers. They select a few from each lot to weigh, by which the total weight of each lot is figured up. Of the larger fish they get a smaller weight in a bbl. than of the smaller mackerel, as the former do not pack so snugly. A fair general average of the weight of mackerel in a barrel may be placed at 140 lbs.

The first mackerel which appear are all large. After the head of the school is passed by there is some intermingling of smaller

mackerel down to 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches, such as we saw in the mackerel being repacked here for the Boston boat on May 25. Only a very few of the 13 $\frac{1}{2}$.

Many of the mackerel this year (1895) weighed 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. These large ones were 2 inches longer than the diameter of the top of the barrel. In 1893 had very much the same sizes at first. Got the first that year about May 15. The large mackerel of the first run are more apt to range from 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 15 inches. 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches is the smallest of No. 1, and may not be accepted as such unless they are mixed in with larger ones.

The first run of mackerel ends about May 30, sometimes earlier, sometimes a little later. There is always some interval between the first and second run. It is usually 3 or 4 days, but may be longer. They may have 2 runs in June. Toward the end of June the fish may drop to a smaller size, and this, in fact, may be almost the beginning the summer run, or the fish correspond in size.

The mackerel of the second run range from

12 to 15 inches. This run is more apt to be a large one than the first, and some years is very much larger. 1893 and 1894 were poor years for the second run, and in both of those years they had none of the third spring run, that is to say the one occurring the latter part of June. Have always counted in the past on the second run for making their largest catches.

Thinks that the May and June runs of fish always strike in the water off the western end of Nova Scotia, and that their appearance on or absence from the shore is due to the wind. An easterly wind keeps the mackerel off shore, and they may pass down without coming within the reach of the fishing apparatus, or only so to a slight extent.

Thinks the influence of the wind is not directly on the fish, but upon the food, which may be blown on or off the shore. When the mackerel are on the shore they invariably find the feed there also in abundance.

Mackerel will feed on something up under the large jelly fishes. Has seen a number of

mackerel around such a jelly (sun squall), when suddenly one would dart at and apparently through it, followed by another, another, etc., in succession. They seem to be timid about it in the beginning, but when one has made the attempt the others follow in quick succession.

In February, 1893, a fisherman in his employment was lobstering in St. Mary's Bay, while there he saw a school of fish which he is confident were mackerel. They were at the surface off Dulcet (?) Head. The bay is very muddy bottom, and Mr. Churchill thought the mackerel might have wintered there in the mud.

Bluff Pt. trap has a wide opening into the heart only on the north side. On the south side there is only a ten foot opening for the passage of a boat. He is confident all the mackerel enter the traps from the north.

The John's Island traps take spring mackerel about 2 days later than the traps between Yarmouth Bar and Maitland. The spring mackerel are certainly always moving south and east.

The first run of mackerel come in toward

the shore just south of Gull Rock, off St. Mary's Bay. That is at least the northern limit of the schools, as they come in toward the shore. This run has been seen sometimes on Grand Manan Bank and Bryer Island Ledge. The most northern point they strike on the main shore is about Black Pt.

The second run moves about the same except that a few may be taken in St. Mary's Bay.

About 17 years ago the mackerel fishery was a great failure, and since then many have gone to lobstering who would otherwise engage in mackerel fishing (These are probably the gill netters). The lobstering is more certain, and they do well at it.

The first trap set in this region was by B. F. Kinney, on John's Island about 15 or 16 years ago. The Yarmouth Bar trap was set the next year.

13 years ago there was a very large body of mackerel on this shore, and the run was continuous from the date when first taken in May until June 25 or July 1.

Clark's Harbor, on Cape Island, is the

location of the most eastern of the large trap nets. Farther east (about Lunenburg, etc.), they have summer or floating traps, which are quite different.

There are small brush traps in Pubnico Bay and Harbor, Lobster Bay and Chebogue River, which take summer mackerel.

The brush weirs in St. Mary's Bay extend from the north side of Sissibou River to the head of the bay on the south side. They take herring, shad and summer mackerel.

The number of mackerel trap nets owned in St. Mary's Bay is 5, 3 on the south side and 2 on the north. None of these were set last summer as there were no mackerel then in the summer. They had been fished for several years previously, however, Out of the past 7 seasons they have made 3 failures in that mackerel fishery, two of them being serious failures.

When Mr. Churchill started in, in 1884, his traps made the 12th on the shore between Cape Sable and Maitland. That large number of traps was very bad, as one cut the other off,

and the present number, 4, is decidedly the best.

Connected with his trap, which has 2 hearts, are 75 anchors, averaging in weight about 300 lbs. each.

The spring of 1894 was the first for 10 years that Halifax fish reached Boston before Yarmouth fish. Fish struck east earlier.

Thinks that ordinarily the bulk of the first 2 runs strikes at the west end of Nova Scotia, and it is only accidentally that they do not.

The spring fish only school when going with the tide, which is ebb, going south.

Never saw any mackerel spawning about here.

Summer mackerel drift and school with the tides. They seem to be going in no particular direction.

They consider best prospect for a catch of summer mackerel off this coast when they are first reported at Lobster Bay and Seal Island Ground. They come in about the middle of July and follow up the shore to St. Mary's Bay.

Mackerel reported in Bay of Fundy seldom get into St. Mary's Bay. When going south in November from Bay of Fundy they may pass through Grand Passage.

There is a sprinkling of summer mackerel all along the shore from Tusket Islands to St. Mary's Cape. At that time the fishermen are using gill nets for herring along this coast, and they may take the mackerel in small quantities.

Never get the large mackerel, such as compose the first spring run, in the fall here.

Do not fish for mackerel in Bay of Fundy, and so little is known as to size and presence of mackerel there. It is possible that some of the large ones may go up there in the spring, but there is no apparatus set that would indicate their presence. The mackerel that come down through Grand Passage in November are large.

Mackerel generally stay in St. Mary's Bay until about November 1. Have been known to remain there later, if no heavy gales occur.

In St. Mary's Bay, besides the traps, and

weirs, they use drag seines, gill nets and hooks and lines.

Does not think the mackerel have decreased. Purse seining has the effect of dividing the schools into smaller bodies.

Purse seiners, on the early spring grounds at the south, do not get the large fish, but generally the second run.

On May 29, Churchill took out 90 bbls. of mackerel in his Bluff Pt. trap; the other traps about Yarmouth took very few. Does not know size of these mackerel, whether first or second run. (W. A. Zwicker, Lunenburg, N. S., May 30, 1895).

The bowls of traps are generally 100 to 120 feet across. His bowl (Bluff Pt. trap) is 60 x 115 feet. He has 2 hearts. The outer heart is practically a bowl with door, and pursing arrangement. 2 inch mesh in bowl, 4 inch in leader, 3 inch in outer heart, 4 inch in inner heart (Churchill).

